



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

2026 Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC): Infectious, Respiratory, and Healthcare-associated Infections Conference

Office of the Chief State Epidemiologist
May 5th – 8th, 2026

Message from the DSHS Chief State Epidemiologist

Welcome to the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC): Infectious, Respiratory, and Healthcare-associated Infections Conference!

In the face of rapidly evolving public health challenges, we continue to stand at the front lines of communicable disease surveillance, outbreak preparedness and response, infection control, laboratory testing and capacity, and hospital safety capabilities. The health of Texans is better because of local and statewide partnerships that drive this work forward.

To further strengthen these partnerships, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) joins three key events – the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Workshop, the Healthcare Safety Conference, and the Respiratory Disease Conference into one comprehensive gathering - Epidemiology & Laboratory Capacity (ELC) 2026: Infectious, Respiratory, and Healthcare-associated Infections Conference.

Texas DSHS is honored to host this unique networking event to connect public health and healthcare professionals from across the state. This conference provides the opportunity to reinforce existing relationships and build new ones, share innovative strategies and expertise, promote evidence-based practices, and foster an adaptable, resilient public health and healthcare workforce prepared to meet today and tomorrow's challenges.

Over the next several days, we will highlight current activities involving epidemiology, laboratory testing, healthcare safety, and outbreak investigations. There will be tabletop exercises and panel discussions. Through these activities, we hope to inspire continued excellence and collaboration.

Thank you for your dedication to improving the well-being of all Texans.



Dr. Varun Shetty
Chief State Epidemiologist,
Texas Department of State Health Services

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Tuesday, May 5 Schedule at a Glance

Time	Lil Tex	Balcones
8:00	Registration and Check-in	
8:15		
8:30	Healthcare-associated Infections: "HAI-Lights" from the Field	
8:45		
9:00		
9:15		
9:30	Break	
9:45		
10:00	Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Healthcare: Opportunities to Improve Health Outcomes	
10:15		
10:30		
10:45	Break	
11:00	Building Healthy Teams	
11:15		
11:30		
11:45		
12:00	Lunch Break 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.	
12:15		
12:30		
12:45		
1:00		
1:15		
1:30	The Evolving Battlefield: Rising Threats of Multidrug Resistance and the Antibiotic Stewardship Response	Evidence-based Health Communication: Research and Practice to Support Public Health
1:45		
2:00		
2:15		
2:30	Break	
2:45	Predictors of Hospital- acquired Condition (HAC) Reduction Program Penalties, FY2025	Trauma-Informed Care and Practice
3:00		
3:15		
3:30	Break	
3:45		
4:00	Measles in the Post-Elimination Era: Implications from the West Texas Outbreak	
4:15		
4:30		
4:45		
5:00		

Tuesday, May 5 Schedule Summaries

8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Healthcare-associated Infections: "HAI-Lights" from the Field Lil Tex

Texas Epidemiologists will highlight notable Texas Healthcare-associated Infections in 2025. Join to learn about a Carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter baumannii* investigation in an acute care hospital and a *Mycobacterium abscessus* investigation in an intensive care unit.



Samantha Curtis, MPH, CIC
Epidemiologist, Healthcare
Safety Unit
Texas DSHS



Kourtney Lopez, MPH, CIC
Epidemiologist, Healthcare
Safety Unit
Texas DSHS



Varsha Misra, MPH, CIC
Epidemiologist, Healthcare
Safety Unit
Texas DSHS



Amanda Shotts, MPH, CIC
Epidemiologist
Lubbock Health Department

9:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Healthcare: Opportunities to Improve Health Outcomes Lil Tex

This session provides an overview of various artificial intelligence (AI) applications and their role in improving healthcare delivery efficiency, optimizing workflows, and enhancing the accuracy and effectiveness of clinical decision-making.



Indranil Bardhan, PhD
Professor and Charles &
Elizabeth Prothro Regents Chair
in Healthcare Management
The University of Texas at Austin

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Building Healthy Teams Lil Tex

This session covers a blended management approach to build healthy teams. Participants will review tools for leaders to create a structure and environment to help programs and staff achieve their goals. This session will share strategies to build a work culture that focuses on intentionality, trust, constant improvement, and open communication.



Courtney Dezendorf, M.Ed.
Deputy Division Director,
Workforce Education and Outreach
Texas Workforce Commission

12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. Lunch Break

1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. The Evolving Battlefield: Rising Threats of Lil Tex
Multidrug Resistance and the Antibiotic
Stewardship Response

An overview of the growing threat of multidrug-resistant pathogens with the focus on key pathogens including *Candida auris*, Carbapenem-resistant *Enterobacteriales* (CRE), *Clostridioides difficile*, and Gonorrhea. Participants will also learn about current antibiotic and diagnostic stewardship strategies aimed at combating the rise of drug resistance.



Kristin Mondy MD, FIDSA, FACP
Chief, Division of Infectious Diseases
The University of Texas

1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Evidence-based Health Communication: Balcones
Research and Practice to Support Public
Health

This session highlights how data and theory can be applied to strengthen health communication strategies. Participants will gain an understanding of evidence-based communication approaches, explore tools for developing more effective messaging, and review a real-world case study demonstrating successful application.



Michael Mackert, Ph.D.
Director, Center for Health
Communication
The University of Texas

2:40 p.m. – 3:40 p.m. Predictors of Hospital-acquired Condition Lil Tex
(HAC) Reduction Program Penalties, FY2025

This session presents a retrospective analysis of 3,082 acute care hospitals using publicly reported Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services FY2025 Hospital-acquired Condition Reduction Program (HACRP) data. Kelly Holmes will examine how patient safety indicators and standardized infection ratios (SIRs) differentially contribute to hospital penalty risk. Results will be framed using the Donabedian model to demonstrate how measurement design and program structure influence financial outcomes. Attendees will gain practical insights to inform strategic decision-making for infection prevention, quality improvement, and executive leadership.



Kelly Holmes, MS, AL-CIP, FAPIC
Senior Associate,
Infection Prevention and
Management Associates, Inc.

2:40 p.m. – 3:40 p.m. Trauma-Informed Care and Practice Balcones

This presentation describes the impact of trauma on our bodies and brains. Holly Fullmer, a Trauma-Informed Policy and Training Specialist, will guide you through understanding trauma and its manifestations in behavior. Additionally, explore the concept of co-regulation and its significance in connecting with and supporting individuals. Gain practical strategies to enhance patient safety and create a supportive healthcare environment.



**Holly Fullmer, MS,
CDCORP, CTCM**
Trauma-Informed Policy and
Training Specialist
Texas Health and Human
Services Commission

**3:55 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Measles in the Post-Elimination Era: Lil Tex
Implications from the West Texas Outbreak**

This session explores the 2025 Texas measles outbreak, highlighting perspectives from local health departments, Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Laboratory, and Infection Prevention Specialists. Speakers will share experiences with outbreak preparedness and response, highlighting key strategies and lessons learned to strengthen efforts across public health and healthcare.



**Amanda Shotts,
MPH, CIC**
Epidemiologist,
Lubbock Public
Health Department



Sadia Almas, MPH
Epidemiologist,
Preparedness and
Response Section
Texas DSHS



Greg Leos, MPH
Director,
Assessment,
Compliance, and
Epidemiology Unit,
Immunization
Section
Texas DSHS



**Elise Huebner, MS,
CPH, CIC**
Epidemiology Team
Lead, Vaccine
Preventable
Diseases, Emerging
and Acute Infectious
Disease Unit
Texas DSHS



Jennifer Gonzales
Clinical Virology
Team Lead, Public
Health Laboratory
Division
Texas DSHS

Wednesday, May 6 Schedule at a Glance

Time	Big Tex	Balcones	Stadium
8:00	Registration and Check-in		
8:15			
8:30	Keynote Address: Finding Mission and Joy in Public Health		
8:45			
9:00			
9:15			
9:30	Legionella Environmental Investigations	A Simple Approach to Increasing Flu Specimen Submissions	Implementing a Workplace Violence Prevention Program
9:45			
10:00			
10:15			
10:30	Break		
10:45	World Cup Collaboration: How Texas is Preparing Response Efforts Involving Higher Volume and Unusual Cases		
11:00			
11:15			
11:30			
11:45			
12:00	Lunch Break 12:00 p.m. - 1:25 p.m.		
12:15			
12:30			
12:45			
1:00			
1:15	Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in Texas Wildlife	Pathogens Perspective: From HUS to Cryptosporidium	Bridging the Gap between Diagnostic and Antimicrobial Stewardship
1:30			
1:45			
2:00			
2:15			
2:30	Poster Session and Networking: Atrium		
2:45			
3:00			
3:15			
3:30			
3:45			
4:00	Category A Waste in Response Plans for Outbreaks of HCID	Transplant-associated Reportable Disease Investigations	Engaging Work around Mpox Prevention and Response
4:15			
4:30			
4:45			
5:00			

Wednesday, May 6 Schedule Summaries

8:30 a.m. – 9:20 a.m. **Keynote Address: Finding Mission and Joy in Public Health** **Big Tex**

This keynote session explores the current state of burnout and job satisfaction in healthcare, providing insight into the challenges impacting today's U.S. public health workforce. Participants will learn practical strategies to enhance both personal and team satisfaction, fostering a more positive and supportive work environment. This session also guides attendees in developing a personal work mission statement, helping participants articulate their personal "why" and connect daily work to shared public health values.



Stephen Pont, MD, MPH
Medical Director, Center for
Public Health Policy and Practice
Texas DSHS

9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. **Beyond Accreditation: Implementing a Sustainable and Effective Workplace Violence Prevention Program** **Stadium**

This session equips participants with the knowledge and skills to lead a comprehensive workplace violence prevention (WVP). Attendees will explore the essential components of an effective WVP program, learn strategies to prevent and respond to incidents, and understand the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration across clinical, security, and administrative teams. The session will also highlight the value of timely reporting and data analysis to identify trends, guide prevention efforts, and support staff well-being.



Melissa Jones, CHPA, BC-HSP, CADC, CEM
Director, Workplace Violence
Prevention Program, Security
Children's Health

9:35 a.m. – 10:20 a.m. **Nothing to it but to Flu it: A Surprisingly Simple Approach to Increasing Flu Specimen Submissions** **Balcones**

This session describes how Public Health Region 8 (PHR 8) worked with the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Laboratory to develop a streamlined approach to flu specimen submission that resulted in successfully onboarding multiple healthcare facilities and an increase in flu specimen submission for the 2025-2026 influenza season.



Elise Rush, MPH, CIC
Epidemiology Manager
Texas DSHS, PHR 8



Michelle Faller, MPH, CIC
Epidemiologist
Texas DSHS, PHR 8

9:40 a.m. – 10:25 a.m. Legionella Environmental Investigations Big Tex

An overview of the environmental investigation process for *Legionella*, including when an investigation is warranted on the core components of an environmental assessment and the interpretation of environmental sampling results. It covers key steps such as epidemiologic review, facility and building system evaluation, environmental assessment, sampling methods, and result interpretation to guide public health response and risk mitigation.



Olivia Smith, PhD, MPH
Epidemiologist, Invasive and
Respiratory Infectious Disease
Team Lead, Emerging and Acute
Infectious Disease Unit
Texas DSHS

10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. World Cup Collaboration: How Texas is Preparing Response Efforts Involving Higher Volume and Unusual Cases Big Tex

Panelists present real-world experiences based on current and ongoing activities their agencies are undertaking to prepare for the 2026 Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup this summer. Participants will also discuss the list of designated Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Health Conditions that could impact human health due to the 2026 World Cup and how this list was objectively created. Panelists represent a variety of viewpoints, including local, regional, and state perspectives, and will discuss both epidemiological and public health preparedness activities.



Heidi Honza, MPH, CPH, CIC
Chief Epidemiologist, Public
Health
Texas DSHS, PHR 2/3



Kirstin Short, MPH
Bureau Chief, Epidemiology
Houston Health Department



James Arango, MPH, MA, CPH
Operations Branch Manager,
Response and Recovery Unit,
Center for Health Emergency
Preparedness and Response,
Regional and Local Health
Operations
Texas DSHS



Haylea Stuteville, MPH
Epidemiologist, Poison
Epidemiology
Texas DSHS

12:00 p.m. – 1:25 p.m. Lunch Break

1:25 p.m. – 2:25 p.m. Mind the Culture: Bridging the Gap between Diagnostic and Antimicrobial Stewardship Stadium

This session explores relationships between diagnostic and antimicrobial stewardship and their role in improving antibiotic use and patient outcomes. It will review key principles and advances in diagnostic testing, including rapid molecular test tools through case-based examples. Participants will learn how integrating diagnostics with stewardship programs supports timely, targeted therapy while reducing unnecessary antibiotic use. This session concludes with practical strategies applicable across healthcare and public health settings.



Alec Wesolowski, PharmD, BCIDP
Clinical Pharmacy Specialist,
Pediatric Infectious Diseases
Dell Children’s Medical Center

1:35 p.m. – 2:20 p.m. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in Texas Wildlife Big Tex

This session provides an overview of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in Texas wildlife including how the virus presents in different animal species. Speakers will explain how laboratory testing is conducted for both animals and humans, as well as how to recognize and reduce potential human exposure. The session will also cover symptom monitoring and testing processes for individuals who may have been exposed.



Alexis Thompson, DVM, PhD, DACVPM
Resident Director of
TVMDL-Canyon,
Texas A&M Veterinary
Medical Diagnostic
Laboratory



Sara Wyckoff, DVM
Wildlife Veterinarian,
Texas Parks and
Wildlife Department



Ali Bridendolph, MPH
Epidemiologist, Acute
Flaccid Myelitis &
Influenza Team,
Emerging and Acute
Infectious Disease Unit
Texas DSHS

1:40 p.m. – 2:25 p.m. Pathogens Perspective: From Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS) to Cryptosporidium Balcones

Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS) in Texas. A comprehensive overview of HUS in Texas, including surveillance data and reporting instructions and a detailed walk-through of case classification and a case study to distinguish between a confirmed, probable, and non-case.



Selena (Quoc Phung) Than, MPH
Epidemiologist, Foodborne/Waterborne Illness,
Emerging and Acute Infectious Disease Unit
Texas DSHS

Thursday, May 7 Schedule at a Glance

Time	Big Tex	Balcones	Stadium
8:00	Registration and Check-in		
8:15			
8:30	Compassion Fatigue and Self-Care: Working in Trauma-Exposed Settings Affects Us		
8:45			
9:00			
9:15	Pathogens Perspective: From Botulism to Vibrio	Overview on the Role of the DSHS Lab	Texas Influenza Surveillance Part 1
9:30			
9:45			
10:00	Break		
10:15			
10:30	Data Collection Improvement for Epidemiology	Timeliness of Candida auris Reporting in Harris County	Texas Influenza Surveillance Part 2
10:45			
11:00			
11:15			
11:30	World Cup Epidemiology	Rabies in Texas	Texas Influenza Surveillance Part 3
11:45			
12:00			
12:15	Lunch Break 12:25 p.m. - 1:55 p.m.		
12:30			
12:45			
1:00			
1:15			
1:30			
1:45			
2:00	Introducing the New Texas National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS)		
2:15			
2:30			
2:45			
3:00			
3:15	Break		
3:30			
3:45	Pertussis: "Whoop" Here it is	Perinatal Hepatitis B (HBV) Vaccines and Investigations	Antimicrobial Resistance Lab Network (ARLN)
4:00			
4:15			
4:30	Presentations Closing Remarks		
4:45			
5:00			

Thursday, May 7 Schedule Summaries

8:30 a.m. – 9:15 a.m. **Compassion Fatigue and Self-Care: Working in Trauma-Exposed Settings Affects Us** **Big Tex**

Professionals encounter people every day who have varied trauma experiences in their personal lives and work. This session gives participants the opportunity to learn about how trauma-informed care principles can strengthen interpersonal skills such as communication, empathy, and responding with consideration to high-stakes topics in professional settings.

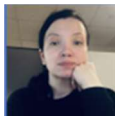


Holly Fullmer, MS, CDCORP, CTCM

Trauma-Informed Policy and Training Specialist
Texas Health and Human Services Commission

9:20 a.m. – 10:05 a.m. **Pathogens Perspective: From Botulism to Vibrio** **Big Tex**

Infant Botulism Outbreak Linked to Powdered Infant Formula. Learn about a national and state-wide multi-state infant botulism outbreak investigation. Understand the local health department's perspective of how the infant botulism investigation is conducted, being notified by the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) of a suspected multi-state outbreak, and coordinating retrieving the sample to submit for additional testing.



Irina Cody, MPH

Epidemiologist,
Foodborne/Waterborne Illness Team Lead, Emerging and Acute Infectious Disease Unit
Texas DSHS



Subodh Potla, MPH

Epidemiologist, Public Health Preparedness
Denton County Public Health

The World is your Oyster: Vibrio Investigation and Shellfish Tags. Attendees will learn to assess case classifications, interpret lab reports, and compare shellfish tags.



Gabriela Calvi, MPH

Epidemiologist,
Foodborne/Waterborne Illness Team, Emerging and Acute Infectious Disease Unit
Texas DSHS

9:25 a.m. – 10:10 a.m. Overview on the Role of the DSHS Lab Balcones

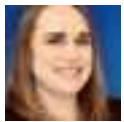
Learn about the differences between a public health laboratory and a clinical laboratory. This session will share the testing services provided by DSHS Public Health Laboratory Division. Attendees will also see examples of how public health laboratories contribute to epidemiological investigations and support outbreak response efforts.



Vanessa Telles, MPH
Senior Advisor, Public Health
Laboratory Division
Texas DSHS

9:30 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. Texas Influenza Surveillance: Coordination, Reporting, and Response, Part 1 of 3 Stadium

This training provides a comprehensive overview of influenza surveillance in Texas and the United States, with a focus on local health departments and public health region roles. Participants will explore key surveillance systems used to monitor influenza activity, including influenza-like illness (ILI) surveillance through ILINet, laboratory-based surveillance, and syndromic surveillance data. These sessions also highlight outbreak response, reporting practices, and identification of novel influenza strains. Through case-based scenarios participants will strengthen their ability to interpret surveillance data and support coordinated public health response efforts.



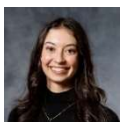
Whitney Tillman, MPH
Manager, Vaccine Preventable
Disease Group, Emerging and
Acute Infectious Disease Unit
Texas DSHS



Alison Bridendolph, MPH
Epidemiologist, Acute Flaccid
Myelitis & Influenza Team,
Emerging and Acute Infectious
Disease Unit
Texas DSHS

10:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. Timeliness of *Candida auris* Reporting in Harris County, Texas, 2021–2024 Balcones

This session describes how *Candida auris* cases are reported to Harris County health departments and explain why timely reporting is critical for controlling the spread in healthcare facilities. Attendees will also learn how reporting delays are interpreted and how to guide public health response.



Sage Smith, MPH
CSTE Applied Epidemiology
Fellow, Office of Epidemiology,
Surveillance and Emerging
Diseases
Harris County Public Health



Jennifer Walker, MPH
Epidemiologist, Office of
Epidemiology, Surveillance and
Emerging Diseases
Harris County Public Health

10:35 a.m. – 11:20 a.m. Data Collection Improvement for Epidemiology Big Tex

This session will explore the importance of improved data collection in the context of public health data modernization. Attendees will learn how applied epidemiology and data modernization efforts intersect in practice and discover strategies to optimize electronic data availability to enhance analysis, outbreak detection, and quality control processes.



Robert L. Smith, MPH
Program Specialist, Senior Analytics
and Health Informatics Specialist
Texas DSHS, PHR 8

10:40 a.m. – 11:25 a.m. Texas Influenza Surveillance: Coordination, Reporting, and Response, Part 2 of 3 Stadium

This training provides a comprehensive overview of influenza surveillance in Texas and the United States, with a focus on local health departments and public health region roles.



Whitney Tillman, MPH
Manager, Vaccine Preventable
Disease Group, Emerging and
Acute Infectious Disease Unit
Texas DSHS



Alison Bridendolph, MPH
Epidemiologist, Acute Flaccid
Myelitis & Influenza Team,
Emerging and Acute Infectious
Disease Unit
Texas DSHS

11:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. World Cup Epidemiology: How Epidemiologists are Preparing for the 2026 FIFA World Cup Big Tex

Participants will present experiences preparing for the 2026 Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup from an epidemiological perspective. Representatives from both Dallas and Houston, where World Cup matches are being played in Texas, will describe how they work with partners from their area to prepare and respond to infectious diseases and other notable health conditions during the event. Discussion will also include how syndromic, wastewater, and environmental surveillance can be utilized to supplement other surveillance tools.



**Heidi Honza, MPH,
CPH, CIC**
Chief Epidemiologist,
Public Health
Texas DSHS, PHR
2/3



**Amanda Wright,
MPH**
Epidemiologist,
Texas DSHS, PHR
6/5s



**Haylea Stuteville,
MPH**
Epidemiologist,
Poison Epidemiology
Texas DSHS



**Audrey Robertson,
MSPH**
Research Specialist,
Wastewater
Epidemiology and
Surveillance Program
Texas DSHS



**Teniola Balogun,
MPH**
Epidemiologist, Texas
Syndromic
Surveillance (TxS2)
Texas DSHS

11:35 p.m. – 12:20 p.m. Rabies in Texas**Balcones**

This session will provide first-hand accounts of rabies investigations alongside state surveillance data on rabies in animals. Attendees will learn about strategies and control methods used in Texas to prevent the spread of rabies and protect public health.



Amanda Kieffer, DVM, MPH, DACVPM

Zoonosis Control
Veterinarian
Texas DSHS, PHR 8



Melissa Maass, LVT
Program Specialist,
Zoonosis Team Lead
Texas DSHS, PHR 7



Patrick Hunt, BS
Program Specialist,
Field Surveillance and
Intervention Team,
Zoonosis Control
Branch
Texas DSHS

11:40 a.m. – 12:25 p.m. Texas Influenza Surveillance: Coordination, Reporting, and Response, Part 3 of 3**Stadium**

This training provides a comprehensive overview of influenza surveillance in Texas and the United States, with a focus on local health departments and public health region roles.



Whitney Tillman, MPH
Manager, Vaccine Preventable
Disease Group, Emerging and
Acute Infectious Disease Unit
Texas DSHS



Alison Bridendolph, MPH
Epidemiologist, Acute Flaccid
Myelitis & Influenza Team,
Emerging and Acute Infectious
Disease Unit
Texas DSHS

12:25 p.m. – 1:55 p.m. Lunch Break

1:55 p.m. – 3:25 p.m. Introducing the New Texas National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS)**Big Tex**

The Public Health Informatics & Data Exchange (PHID) team will introduce the new Texas National Electronic Disease Surveillance System, or NEDSS. This will be a more modern platform designed to strengthen how we track and respond to reportable infectious diseases statewide. This system will enhance data quality, improve timeliness, and support better collaboration across jurisdictions.



Jessica Romano, MPH
System Analyst, Public Health
Informatics & Data Exchange
Technical Lead, Office of Public
Health Data Strategy and
Modernization
Texas DSHS



Sepehr Arshadmansab, MPH
Health Informatics Specialist,
Public Health Informatics & Data
Exchange, Office of Public
Health Data Strategy and
Modernization
Texas DSHS

3:40 p.m. – 4:25 p.m. Antimicrobial Resistance Lab Network (ARLN) Stadium

This session discusses the methods and procedures to identify and characterize target pathogens. Brady Ryan will provide real world examples of outbreaks and novel/rare organisms identified through the program. Both nationally published and internally generated Texas data will be used.



Brady Ryan, B.S.
Microbiologist, HAI/VPD Team
Lead, Microbiology Unit
Texas DSHS

3:45 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Perinatal Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) Vaccines and Investigations Balcones

This presentation explains collaborating with health systems and providers to identify pregnant women that are Hepatitis B Surface Antigen positive, as well as providing case management to their infants.



Catherine Peterson
Program Specialist, Perinatal
Hepatitis B Prevention Program,
Immunization Section
Texas DSHS

3:50 p.m. – 4:35 p.m. Pertussis: “Whoop” Here It Is Big Tex

This presentation provides an overview of Bordetella pertussis, detailing the transmission, clinical symptoms, and case definitions that prompt public health follow-up in the State of Texas. Participants in this presentation should be able to understand and describe the criteria used to determine case status, identify close contacts and proper infection control measures, and recommend the appropriate postexposure prophylaxis. Discussion may include notes from the field, common pitfalls, and a Questions and Answer segment.



Amanda Wright, MPH
Epidemiologist
Texas DSHS, PHR 6/5S

4:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Presentations Closing Remarks Big Tex

Directors of the Emerging and Acute Infectious Disease Unit (EAIDU) and Healthcare Safety Unit (HSU) close out the 2026 Epidemiology & Laboratory Capacity (ELC) 2026: Infectious, Respiratory, and Healthcare-associated Infections Conference.



Annette Rodriguez, MPH
Director, Emerging and Acute
Infectious Disease Unit
Texas DSHS



**Jennifer E. Lee-Pearce, PhD,
CTCD, CTCM**
Director, Healthcare Safety Unit
Texas DSHS

Friday, May 8 Tabletop Schedule at a Glance

Time	Stadium	Mustang	Bevo
8:00	Registration and Check-in		
8:15			
8:30	High- Consequence Infectious Diseases (HCID)	New World Screwworm	Trace Me if You Can: Traceback Investigation of a Salmonella Outbreak
8:45			
9:00			
9:15			
9:30			
9:45			
10:00			
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10:45			
11:00			
11:15			
11:30			
11:45			
12:00	Lunch Break		
12:15	(after your morning tabletop session concludes)		
12:30			
12:45			
1:00			
1:15			
1:30			
1:45			
2:00			
2:15			
2:30			
2:45			
3:00			

Friday, May 8 Tabletop Schedule Summaries

8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. High-Consequence Infectious Diseases (HCID) Tabletop Stadium

The high-consequence infectious diseases (HCID) tabletop exercise involves a discussion-based scenario revolving around a possible viral hemorrhagic fever (VHF). The exercise will focus primarily on epidemiologic-related aspects, such as initial investigation of a patient under investigation, coordinating specimen collection and transport, follow-up investigation, and monitoring. Attendees should be familiar with their agency's plans for responding to suspect VHF cases and their role in the ensuing epidemiologic investigation.



**Stephen White, PhD,
MLS(ASCP)CM**
Epidemiologist, Emerging and
Acute Infectious Disease Unit
Texas DSHS

8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. New World Screwworm Mustang

This tabletop exercise provides an overview of the clinical presentation and epidemiology of New World screwworm (NWS) in America, with a focus on human cases. Participants will learn the key steps in conducting an NWS case investigation, including how to accurately complete a confirmed human infection case report form. The presentation also summarizes current public health laboratory testing methods for NWS identification. Finally, the session highlights the complementary roles of public health and animal health agencies, and how a "One Health" approach strengthens NWS prevention, detection, and control efforts.



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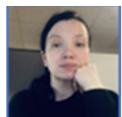
This tabletop exercise provides training on how to investigate and perform traceback investigations during a major multi-state outbreak of Salmonella.



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Thank You Conference Committee!

The Texas Department of State Health Services' Disease Surveillance and Epidemiology Section is grateful for the tireless dedication and expertise of these remarkable staff who coordinated the 2026 Conference:

Co-Coordiators:

- Aaron Rathbun
- Priscilla Villarreal

Committee Members:

- Connie Valenzuela
- Joy Zimmerman-Bodi
- Kenneth Davis
- Stephen White
- Varsha Misra
- Whitney Tillman

Venue and Parking

The Commons Conference Center is at the J. J. Pickle Research Center at 10100 Burnet Rd, Austin, Texas 78758. Visitor parking is in the parking lots to the north, west, and east of the Commons building. Americans with Disability Act (ADA) accessible spaces are located on the west and north sides of the building. Visitors using these parking lots will need to print and display a parking permit where it is visible on their dashboard.

Food and drink can be purchased on-site at the Commons Café which operates from 7:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. daily.

Further information about the Commons is online at <https://commons.utexas.edu/>.

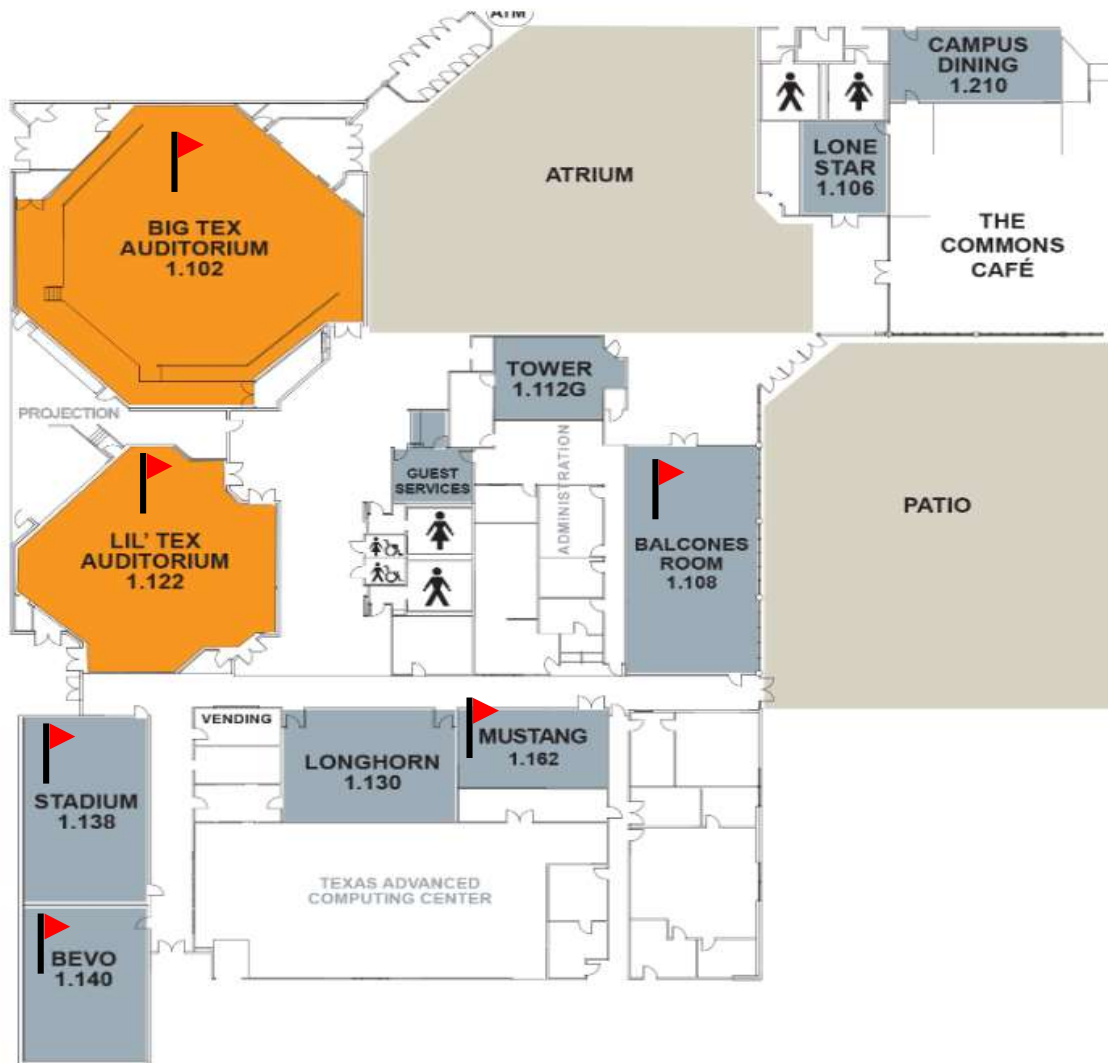


Figure 1. Map of UT Commons Conference Center Layout

DSHS General Information

Vision

- ★ Protecting the health of Texans

Values

- ★ Ensure effective use of resources
- ★ Collaborate with our partners
- ★ Serve the public with compassion and respect
- ★ Empower a dedicated workforce
- ★ Lead with integrity and empathy
- ★ Strive for excellence

Mission

- ★ Improving health outcomes of all Texans by providing essential laboratory services and using proven strategies to control emerging and ongoing infectious disease threats.

Contact Information

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